

Remarks

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in view of the following remarks and discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-24, 38, 40, 41, and 44 are currently pending in the application.

In the outstanding Office Action Claims 1, 7, 38, and 44 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Japanese Publication No. 2000-15864 to Kobayashi.¹

Initially, Applicants express thanks for the courtesies extended by Examiner Pham to Applicants' representatives during a personal interview on February 7, 2005. Applicants respectfully assert that the following remarks, with the Interview Summary prepared by the Examiner at the conclusion of the interview, includes the substance of the interview in accordance with MPEP § 713.04.

Applicants further express thanks for the Examiner's indication that Claims 2-6, 8-24, 40, and 41 are allowed.

Regarding the rejection of Claims 1, 7, 38, and 44, Applicants respectfully submit herewith a verified English language translation of Japanese patent application no. 11-100177, to which the current application claims priority. As discussed during the interview, Applicants respectfully assert that the Japanese application has a filing date of April 7, 1999, which is prior to the publication date of Kobayashi, which is January 18, 2000. Thus, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of Claims 1, 7, 38, and 44 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) be withdrawn, and respectfully request the allowance of Claims 1, 7, 38, and 44.

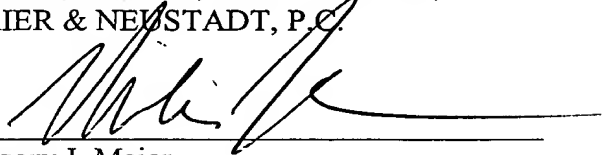
Consequently, in view of the present amendment, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal Allowance. A Notice of Allowance for Claims 1, 7, 38, and 44 is earnestly solicited.

¹ Applicants respectfully assert that during a personal interview, the Examiner acknowledged that these claims were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e), rather than under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as indicated in the Office Action.

Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned representative at the below listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.



Gregory J. Maier
Attorney of Record
Registration No. 25,599

Customer Number

22850

Tel: (703) 413-3000
Fax: (703) 413 -2220
(OSMMN 06/04)

Philip J. Hoffmann
Registration No. 46,340